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ABSTRACT

The Ottawa Treaty of 1862 provided that a 20,000-acre parcel of tribal land be used to endow a school for the benefit of the Ottawa Indians. This book is a case study of manipulation and fraud, whereby the Ottawas were promised a university, paid for most of it, and then lost it in the offices of bureaucrats. Thanks to investigations at several levels of accountability in the 19th century and to the findings of the Indian Claims Commission in the 20th century, the clandestine maneuvers and the misuse of Ottawa resources by enterprising White invaders were recorded in great detail. The story of the Ottawa Indian University fraud is not a simple one; it involved a complex confrontation among Indian traditionalists, Indian nontraditionalists, government officials, territorial and state bureaucrats, educational speculators, and Christian missionaries. The story calls for moral analysis because it was precisely in the name of education and morality (that is, the establishment of a Baptist university) that the fraud took place. However, the involvement of the principal would-be educators in the financial aspects of the university's establishment clouded their judgment and promoted special-interest responses. A major conclusion of the book is that legalism and pragmatism were the intellectual stalking-horses that contributed most to the victory of economic interest over human concerns in the case. Ottawa University is still in operation at its original location about 50 miles southwest of Kansas City, and has recently announced a plan to provide tuition and boarding scholarships to Ottawa tribal members. The book contains references in notes, a bibliography, an index, and photographs. (SV)

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